

Case 3238

***Rhagodes* Pocock, 1897 (Arachnida, Solifugae): proposed conservation**

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Article 81.2.2 of the Code, is to conserve the generic name *Rhagodes* Pocock, 1897 for a group of solifuges or sun spiders (family RHAGODIDAE) by proposed suppression of the older name *Rhax* Hermann, 1804. *Rhagodes* was an unnecessary replacement for *Rhax*, but has been used by almost all authors since 1897. Acceptance of the priority of the name *Rhax* would not serve nomenclatural stability, as it would require all 27 nominal species currently included in *Rhagodes* to be transferred to the nominal genus *Rhax*.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Arachnida; RHAGODIDAE; *Rhagodes*; *Rhagodes melanus*; solifuges; sun spiders; Asia; Africa.

1. In 1804 (p. 13), Hermann used the name *Rhax* for a genus of solifuges or sun spiders (now in family RHAGODIDAE). His brief description of the genus did not include any nominal species, but was supplemented by observations on some historical texts in which sun spiders were mentioned (see footnote on p. 13).

2. C.L. Koch (1839) was unable to recognise the taxon as described by Hermann, but attributed two species to the genus: '*Rh. melas*' and '*Rh. phalangioides*', which refer to *Galeodes melanus* Olivier, 1807 (p. 308) and *G. phalangium* Olivier, 1807 (p. 308), respectively. Under Article 67.2.2 of the Code, both species are eligible for designation as the type species of *Rhax*. However, *Galeodes phalangium* Olivier, 1807 was originally designated as the type species of another nominal genus *Rhagoditta* Roewer, 1933 (p. 277). To my knowledge, a type species has not been explicitly designated for *Rhax*.

3. The generic name *Rhax* was used by some later authors (e.g. Simon, 1879; Kraepelin, 1899, 1901), although these usages attribute the name to C.L. Koch (1839) and not to Hermann (1804).

4. Pocock (1897, p. 252) was of the opinion, wrongly under the current Code, that Hermann's name *Rhax* was invalid and so he established the replacement name *Rhagodes*. Pocock took this view because he believed that Hermann (1804) had intended *Rhax* to be a synonym of *Galeodes* Olivier, 1791. Although he did not nominate a type species for the genus, Pocock later (1900, p. 148) designated *Galeodes melanus* Olivier, 1807 as the type species of *Rhagodes*, which under Article 67.8 also becomes the type species of *Rhax*. Pocock (1897, p. 252) erected the subfamily RHAGODINAE for *Rhagodes*, which was elevated to family status by Roewer (1933). *Rhagodes* currently contains 27 desert-dwelling species, ranging from central Asia through to north-eastern Africa.

5. Despite the views of Pocock (1897), the name *Rhax* Hermann, 1804 is available under the Code and Pocock's decision to establish a replacement name did no more than create a junior objective synonym. However, the senior synonym *Rhax* has not been used as a valid name since Kraepelin (1901) and has been fully supplanted by the junior synonym *Rhagodes*. Reversion to the senior name *Rhax* would be a destabilising action that would require all 27 nominal species currently included in *Rhagodes* to be transferred to the nominal genus *Rhax*. Article 23.9.2 cannot be invoked because Kraepelin used *Rhax* in 1901.

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary power to suppress the generic name *Rhax* Hermann, 1804 for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Rhagodes* Pocock, 1897 (gender: feminine), type species *Galeodes melanus* Olivier, 1807 by subsequent designation by Pocock (1900);
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *melanus* Olivier, 1807, as published in the binomen *Galeodes melanus* (specific name of the type species of *Rhagodes* Pocock, 1897);
- (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the name *Rhax* Hermann, 1804, as suppressed in (1) above.

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